

REMARKS

This case has been carefully reviewed and analyzed in view of the Office Action dated 5 October 2004. Responsive to the Office Action, Claims 6 and 17 are now cancelled from this case without prejudice or disclaimer, and Claims 1 – 2, 8, 10, 12 – 13, 18, and 20 are amended for further prosecution with the other pending claims. Such amendment of claims is made in light of the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter, and to remove certain incidentally noted informalities.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 1 – 2 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Southard et al. reference in view of the Schreck et al. Patent Application. The Examiner additionally rejected Claims 12 – 13 under the same statutory section as being unpatentable over Southard et al. in view of Schreck et al., further in view of the Bianca et al. reference. As for Claims 6, 8 – 11, 17, 18, and 20, the Examiner objected to those claims for being dependent upon a rejected base claim. The Examiner indicated that these claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base and any intervening claims.

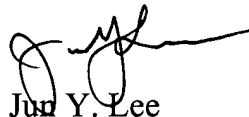
Accordingly, independent Claim 1 is now amended to incorporate therein the subject matter of Claim 6 which had depended directly therefrom; and, independent Claim 12 is amended to incorporate the subject matter of Claim 17

which had depended directly therefrom. Claims 6 and 17 have been correspondently cancelled and Claims 8 and 18 have been amended to depend from Claims 1 and 12, respectively, rather than from cancelled Claims 6 and 17. Certain corrections have also been incorporated in various ones of the pending claims to remove certain informalities incidentally noted therein.

Such amendment of claims is made in the interests of expediting prosecution of this case, given the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter. Such amendment of claims is made, moreover, without addressing the merits of the Examiner's rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

It is now believed that Applicant's pending claims are now in allowable form. It is respectfully submitted, therefore, that the subject Patent Application has been placed fully in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
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